



News Release



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SHELBY COUNTY INFANT MORTALITY RATE HITS ALL TIME LOW

MEMPHIS – For the first time in more than 100 years, the Infant Mortality (Death) Rate for Shelby County dropped to its lowest point on record, 9.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, according to the Shelby County Health Department (SCHD).

Infant Mortality Rate, the rate at which babies die before their first birthday, is one of the most important measures of community health. It is the result of what happens to babies in the first year of their lives, the health of women before, during and between their pregnancies, their access to healthcare throughout their lives and the health risks presented by the communities in which they live and work. Reductions in the number of infant deaths are the result of improvements in all of these areas.

“I am pleased to see the number of infant deaths decrease,” said Shelby County Mayor Mark H. Luttrell, Jr. “With community partners such as Healthy Shelby and many others working alongside the Shelby County Health Department, we will continue to make infant mortality a priority and reduce our rate even further.”

Infant mortality is complex and results from many contributing factors which are cumulative throughout the course of the mother’s life—before, during and between pregnancies. In Shelby County, infant mortality is primarily associated with babies born prematurely.

“The improvement we are seeing is the result of the strategic community wide, multi-layered approach, a commitment of resources and implementing evidence-based approaches,” said Yvonne Madlock, director of the SCHD. “While the African-American infant mortality rate of 12.4 per 1,000 live births is the lowest on record in Shelby County, we continue to see a disproportionate amount of infant deaths in that community in comparison to other groups which means we still have work to do.”

The national Infant Mortality Rate target established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through Healthy People 2020 is 6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births. In 2003, the Infant Mortality Rate in Shelby County was 14.9, the highest rate in more than a decade.

“Healthy babies are a consequence of healthy mothers living in healthy neighborhoods and homes,” said Michelle Taylor, M.D., maternal and child health physician for SCHD. “We will continue working with our partners to stress the importance of early prenatal care, breastfeeding and family planning.”

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The B4BabyLife mobile app is a FREE app for Android and iPhone users to learn about what to do before, during and after pregnancies. Expectant families, including parents and grandparents, are encouraged to download it.